

GOP GIRDS FOR CENSUS BATTLE FIRST TO HOLD JOB, HE'S LEAVING FOR PRIVATE SECTOR

(By Jim VandeHei and John Mercurio)

Fearing the loss of two dozen House seats if his party blinks, Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) has tapped former National Republican Congressional Committee Chairman Bill Paxon (N.Y.) to prepare GOP troops for a budget fight over the 2000 Census that could provoke a partial government shutdown.

At Hastert's request, Paxon huddled this week with NRCC Chairman Tom Davis (Va.), Republican media strategist Eddie Mahe and others to help devise a coordinated strategy to block President Clinton's plan to use sampling in the 2000 Census.

"I am one of a group of people trying to figure out how to keep Mr. Bill Clinton from imposing his political calculations on the census," Mahe said in an interview.

The impending battle will erupt in earnest next month when GOP leaders begin working on the funding bill for Commerce, Justice, State, the judiciary and related agencies. During last year's budget negotiations, Republicans and Clinton agreed to put off final decisions on whether to fund the use of sampling until this June, when the results of the Census Bureau's dress rehearsals would be available and the Supreme Court would have ruled on a much-anticipated legal challenge to sampling.

The budget fight follows the High Court's decision in late January that the bureau's plan to use sampling in the decennial for reapportionment of House seats violates the Census Act.

But according to pro-sampling Democrats' interpretation of Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's majority opinion, the federal government can, "if feasible," use sampling for the very different purpose of redistricting, or the redrawing of House district boundary lines, within each state.

Following the court's ruling, Census Bureau Director Kenneth Prewitt said the Clinton administration will seek an increased level of funding to conduct two counts—one using the GOP-backed practice of trying to count every American, the other using the Clinton-endorsed sampling.

Meanwhile, Democrats are trying to amend the Census Act to allow sampling for reapportionment, and Republicans will try to place language in the spending bill that would restrict funding for any sampling practices associated with the census.

The GOP plan, according to informed sources, likely will include a media campaign against Clinton's plan, which most House Democrats support.

It will also include a lobbying campaign to convince Republican Members to stand up to Clinton if he threatens to shut down the government to scare off opposition.

"Everybody knows this is 'do or die' for the party," said one GOP official familiar with the nascent strategy. "We're not going to back down on this."

That spending plan will include a provision preventing the bureau from using statistical sampling, which Hastert and Paxon fear will cost Republicans dozens of House seats in the new millennium.

"The Speaker and virtually every GOP leader believe no single vote will have greater ramifications on the future of the Republican majority than the vote to block President Clinton from changing the way we conduct the census," said one Hastert confidant.

But Democrats understand that if Clinton backs down, Republicans' chances of retaining their majority will increase.

He won't capitulate to GOP demands, according to senior Democratic leadership sources.

"They have never shown any weakness and I don't know why they would," said a top Democratic adviser, who insisted White House officials will shut down the government if Republicans refuse to back down.

Democrats said the Republican moves show they are preparing to allow this battle to result in a shutdown. A government shutdown in 1995 caused their party's support to plummet and ultimately led to a more conciliatory tone among House GOP leaders.

"They weren't able to convince the American people to believe they were justified in doing that in 1995, and I don't see how they would be able to do so in 1999," said Rep. HENRY WAXMAN (D-Calif.), the ranking member of the Government Reform Committee.

"If they do make it a partisan issue and close down three departments of government, they're going to need to spend a lot of money to try to convince people they're not being partisan again," Waxman said. "And I don't think they're going to succeed."

Rep. CAROLYN MALONEY (D-N.Y.), the ranking member of the Government Reform subcommittee on the census, said Democrats can turn back the Republican budget proposal by appealing to "at least 10 Republicans" to support sampling. So far, only three Republicans—Reps. CONNIE MORELLA (Md.), CHRISTOPHER SHAYS (Conn.) and NANCY JOHNSON (Conn.)—have sided with Democrats in the sampling battle.

"I truly believe there are at least 10 Republicans who truly care about their constituents and their country who would not go along with this."

But MALONEY said the GOP media plan "wouldn't surprise me. The Republican machine has been focussing like a laser beam on this subject in their attempts to make sure that blacks, Hispanics and Asians are not counted. It's wrong, and they should stop."

While talk of a government shutdown may be hyperbole by both sides, the political posturing underscores how contentious the upcoming budget debate will be.

Last Congress, Republican and Democratic leaders ended months of bickering over the census by delaying a final decision until after the election. They passed a six-month funding bill and agreed to tackle the tricky topic when the pressure of impending elections subsided and the Supreme Court had ruled on a legal challenge to the sampling plan.

The six-month funding bill expires in June, but HASTERT wants appropriators to start work soon, likely early next month, to provide leadership with as much as time as possible to avert a shutdown.

In the meantime, Paxon is working with several Members and strategists to develop a plan to win the public relations war over the census.

Besides Davis, Mahe and Paxon, House Administration Chairman BILL THOMAS (R-Calif.); Rep. DAN MILLER (R-Fla.), chairman of the Government Reform subcommittee on the census; and two GOP strategists, Bill Greener and Chuck Greener, are intimately involved in the strategizing, sources said.

Paxon's team is considering a paid media campaign to educate voters on the census issue in the weeks leading up to a final vote on legislation and a variety of communications ideas to prevent the PR debacle in the wake of the 1995 government shutdown, the sources said.

GOP leaders have not decided who will run the media campaign or who will pay for it.

In the meantime, HASTERT plans to hand more money to Miller and his census subcommittee to conduct an oversight investigation into how the administration is reacting to the Supreme Court decision on sampling.

He also plans to educate Members on the topic and lobby them to support the leadership's position.

Davis said GOP leaders don't anticipate more than one Republican defecting, though both SHAYS and MORELLA remain opposed to leadership's position, according to their spokesmen. "And we'll pick up some Democrats," he said, though he refused to list any possibilities.

THE CALENDAR

Mr. CRAIG. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration, en bloc, of the following bills reported by the Environment and Public Works Committee: Calendar No. 53, S. 67; Calendar No. 56, S. 437; Calendar No. 57, S. 453; Calendar No. 58, S. 460; Calendar No. 59, H.R. 92; Calendar No. 60, H.R. 158; Calendar No. 61, H.R. 233; and Calendar No. 62, H.R. 396.

I further ask unanimous consent that the bills be considered read a third time and passed, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to any of these bills be printed at the appropriate place in the RECORD, with the above occurring en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ROBERT C. WEAVER FEDERAL BUILDING

The bill (S. 67) to designate the headquarters building of the Department of Housing and Urban Development in Washington, District of Columbia, as the "Robert C. Weaver Federal Building," was considered, ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, read the third time, and passed; as follows:

S. 67

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. DESIGNATION OF ROBERT C. WEAVER FEDERAL BUILDING.

In honor of the first Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, the headquarters building of the Department of Housing and Urban Development located at 451 Seventh Street, SW., in Washington, District of Columbia, shall be known and designated as the "Robert C. Weaver Federal Building".

Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the building referred to in section 1 shall be deemed to be a reference to the "Robert C. Weaver Federal Building".

Mr. MOYNIHAN. Madam President, it is fitting that we have passed this legislation to name the Department of Housing and Urban Affairs (HUD) Washington, D.C. headquarters after Dr. Robert C. Weaver, adviser to three Presidents, national chairman of the NAACP, and the first African-American Cabinet Secretary.

In 1961, President Kennedy appointed Dr. Weaver to head the Housing and Home Finance Agency, the precursor to the Department of Housing and Urban Development. In 1966, when President Johnson elevated the agency to Cabinet rank, he chose Dr. Weaver to head the department. Bob Weaver was, in Johnson's phrase, "the man for the job." He thus became its first Secretary, and the first African-American to head a Cabinet agency.